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A DRAMATIC TENDENCY IN THE FATHERS.

IN my paper entitled 'A Remote Analogue to the Miracle Play,' (*Jour. Germ. Phil.* 4. 421-451) I commented (pp. 423-4) upon the tendency of certain editors of the Fathers to assume that the works containing dramatic dialogue are spurious. I now find that invented addresses to the infant Savior, by Joseph and Mary respectively, are to be found in the works of Ephraem Syrus († 373). As I am not acquainted with Syriac, I think it safer not to translate the Latin rendering, since the latter is no doubt closer to the original than any version of it would be. The passage in question is (2. 415-6):

'Joseph Dei Filio parvuli speciem praeferenti amplexum dabat, praestabat obsequia, puerum sciens esse Deum. Bonum habere praesentem sibi gratulabatur, reverebatur Justum, ipsius acta observantem, magnopere suspensus tenebatur utrinque. "Ecquis," ajebat, "me dignetur honore tanto, ut Altissimi Filius mihi sit Filius? Solicitum me habuit, fateor, injecta de matre tua suspicio, proptereaue illam dimittere cogitabam; laqueum mihi fecit mysterii ignoratio quod occultus in ea me lateret thesaurus qui inopem me momento posset efficere copiosissimum; David proavus meus regale diadema gestavit, ego vero eo honore dejectus in summam contemtionem deveni, quemque natura regem destinavit, fors fabrum fecit. Nunc vero ablata revenit corona, postquam regum Dominus in meum venis sinum."

Simili affectu exarsit Maria, erupitque in voces multorum invidiam concitaturas, istud Nato modulata carmen: "Ecceui acceptum referam, quod pepererim simplicem et multiplicem, parvum et magnum, mihi hic totum, et ubique totum. Quo die Gabriel ad meam humilitatem venit, ex ancilla Dominam fecit, et quae eram divinitatis tuae famula, repente mater evasi humanitatis tuae, Domine et Fili; ancilla, extemplo facta sum

regis filia ; tu me fecisti, qui es Filius Regis. Inter omnes Davidis posteros elegisti puellam humilem, terraeque filiam, caeloque invexisti, qui es caelestis. Papae quid video ! video infantem mundo antiquiorem ; caelo suspensum tenet oculum, clausum os ; ejus tamen silentium, ut apparet, cum Deo sermo est. Nemo tamen vidit uspiam parvulum sic omnia circumspicientem ; aspectus iste indicat hunc esse cujus providentia mundus administratur, atque superum inferumque rebus consulitur ; talem enim habere decet oculum qui imperat atque cuncta gubernat. Quorsum igitur tibi fontes lactis aperiā, qui rerum Fons es et Caput ? aut quorsum tibi cibum porrigam, cujus mensa mundo alimenta ministrat ? aut quo pacto attingam fascias circumfuso te lumine amictum involventes ? Praeterea quo te appelem nomine non video, Fili Viventis, nec enim ausim vocare te Filium Joseph ; horret at vocem auris, nec vero sanguis ejus es. At nec tutum mihi, ejus cui sum desponsata nomen suppressere. Quare licet unus tuus sit Pater, parentes tibi deinceps plures addiscam. Et sane nec decies millies nomina te explicant, ex quo Filius Dei etiam hominis factus es Filius, Filius Joseph, et Filius David, et Dominus Mariae. Jam quis fecit elinguem Dominum linguarum ? Quin ergo, Sancte, non loqueris pro matre, postquam maligni quidam homines mihi ex tuo purissimo conceptu struxere calumniam ? quin obtrectantibus ostentum opponis, unde cognoscant tuae conceptionis Auctorem ? Tui causa, qui omnes amas, in odium multorum incidi, infestorque et exagitor quod conceperim et pepererim Reparatorem mundo, Adae Consolatorem ob redditam Paradisi clavem. Ecce autem turbatur insurgitque mare, et matrem tuam petit, ut olim Jonam. Eccum Herodes saevus fluctus suffocare molitur matris Dominum suae. Mihi tamen sedet animo fixum, extorrem tecum errare ; certa quippe ubique, te duce, paratur salus. Carcer, te praesente, carcer non est ; te sublevante, homines caelo invecti sunt : sepulcra sepulcra non sunt, te vindice, qui est resurrectio et vita mortuorum.”

It thus becomes clear that the dramatic tendency in question did exist in the fourth century. On the other hand, it would seem as though my statement on p. 448, ‘This method of

animating a discourse by the introduction of dramatic elements is undoubtedly due to Hellenic influence,' might need to be taken with reservation. It seems doubtful whether Ephraem was acquainted with Greek ; yet the brief Syrian life of him (quoted in the *Encyc. Brit.* under his name) says : 'After a time he went . . . to Caesarea of Cappadocia to Basil, and received from him the imposition of hands for the diaconate.' Would this be likely if he knew no Greek, seeing that his home was in Edessa, where Christianity was flourishing at this time ? In any case, Greek influences are likely to have reached him, since, for example, the Edessene Protonike legend, which had been elaborated by the end of the fourth century, is, according to Lipsius (*Die Edessenische Abgar-Sage*, p. 91) based upon the story of the invention of the cross by Helena.

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